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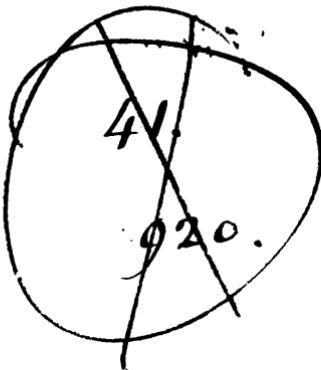
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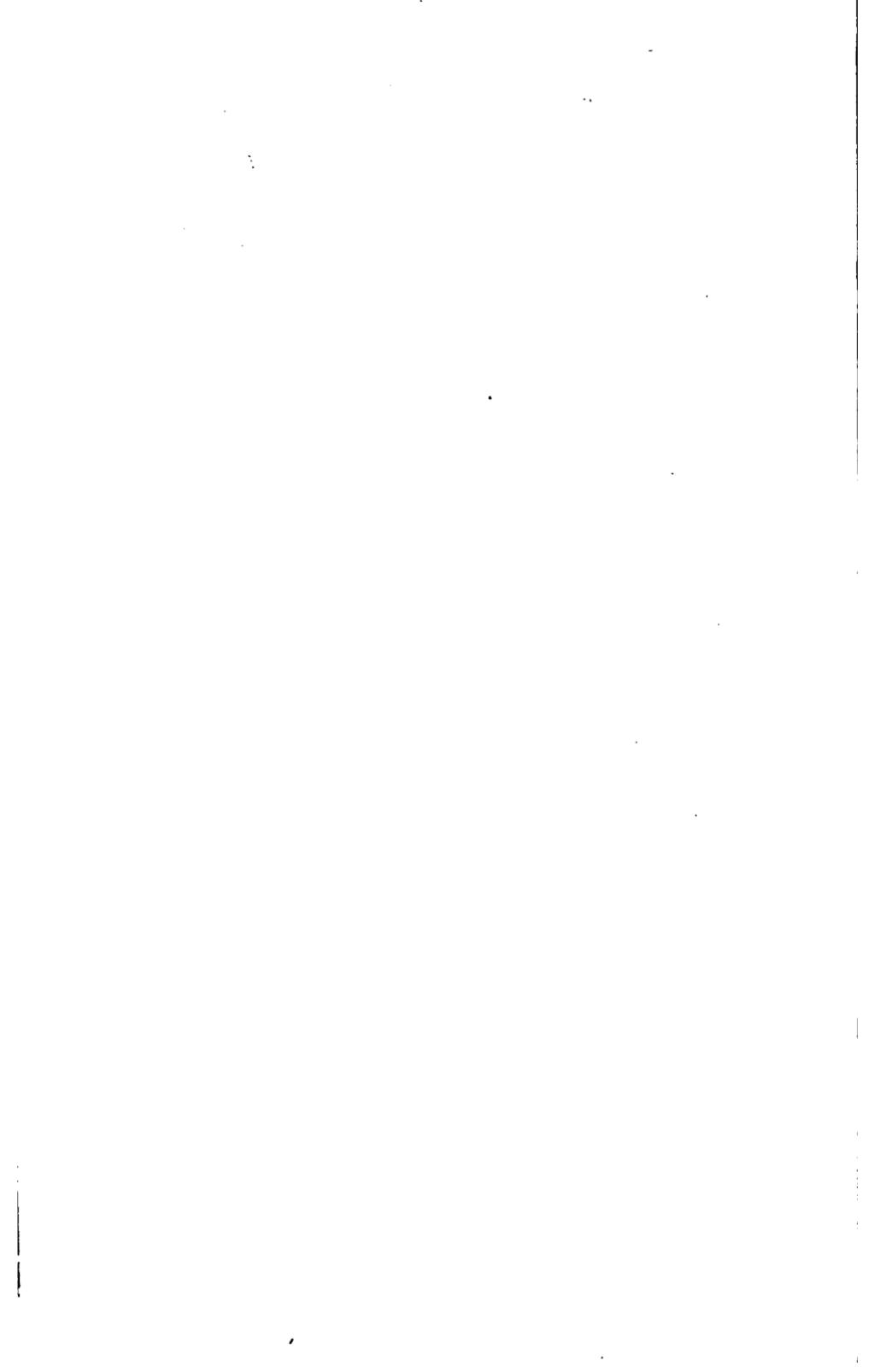


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AN ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
ROMAN ROAD  
FROM  
ALLCHESTER TO DORCHESTER,  
AND OTHER  
ROMAN REMAINS  
IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD:

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A PAPER READ TO THE  
ASHMOLEAN SOCIETY, NOV. 9, 1840.

BY  
THE REV. ROBERT HUSSEY, B.D.  
STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH.



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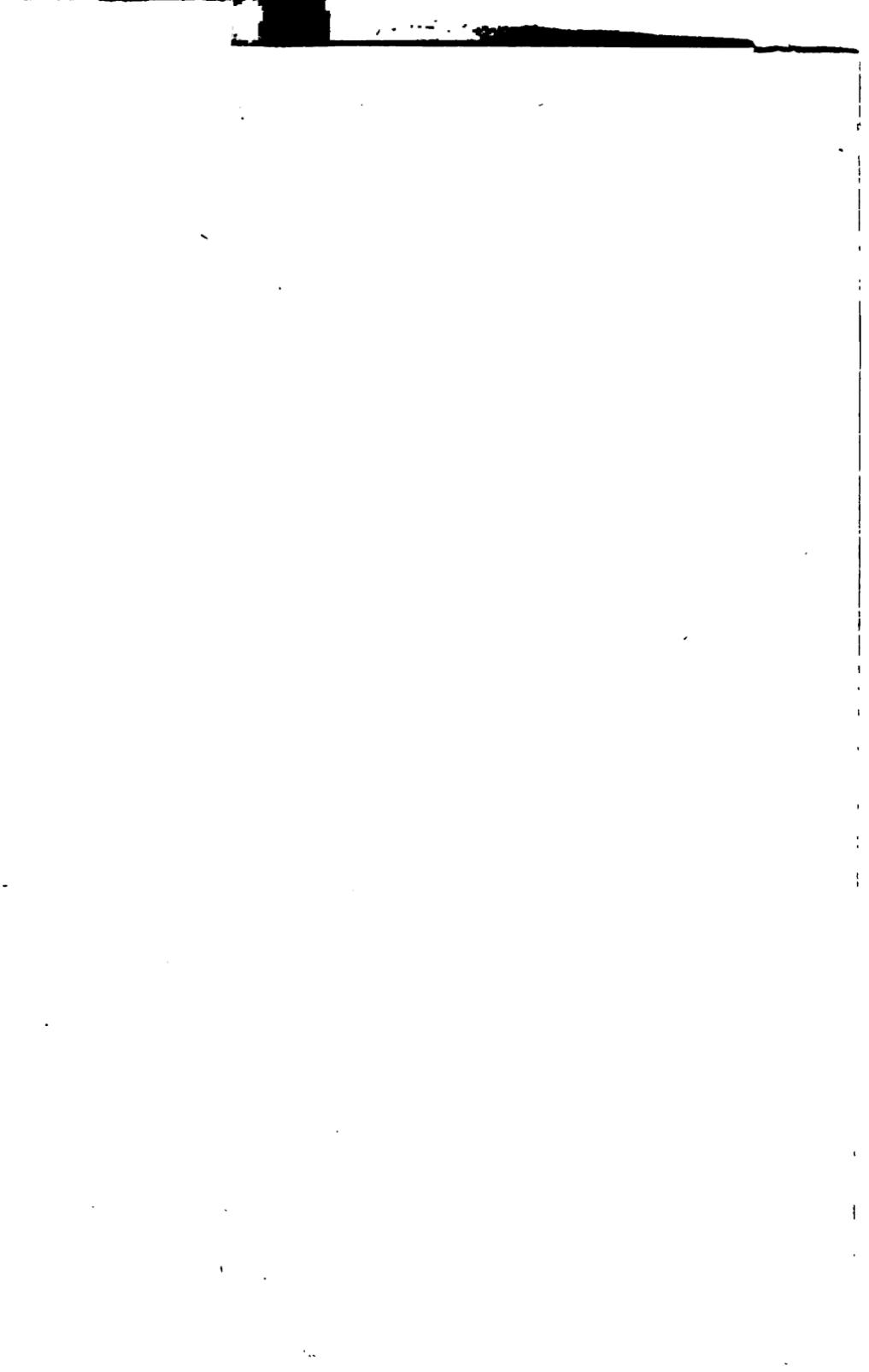


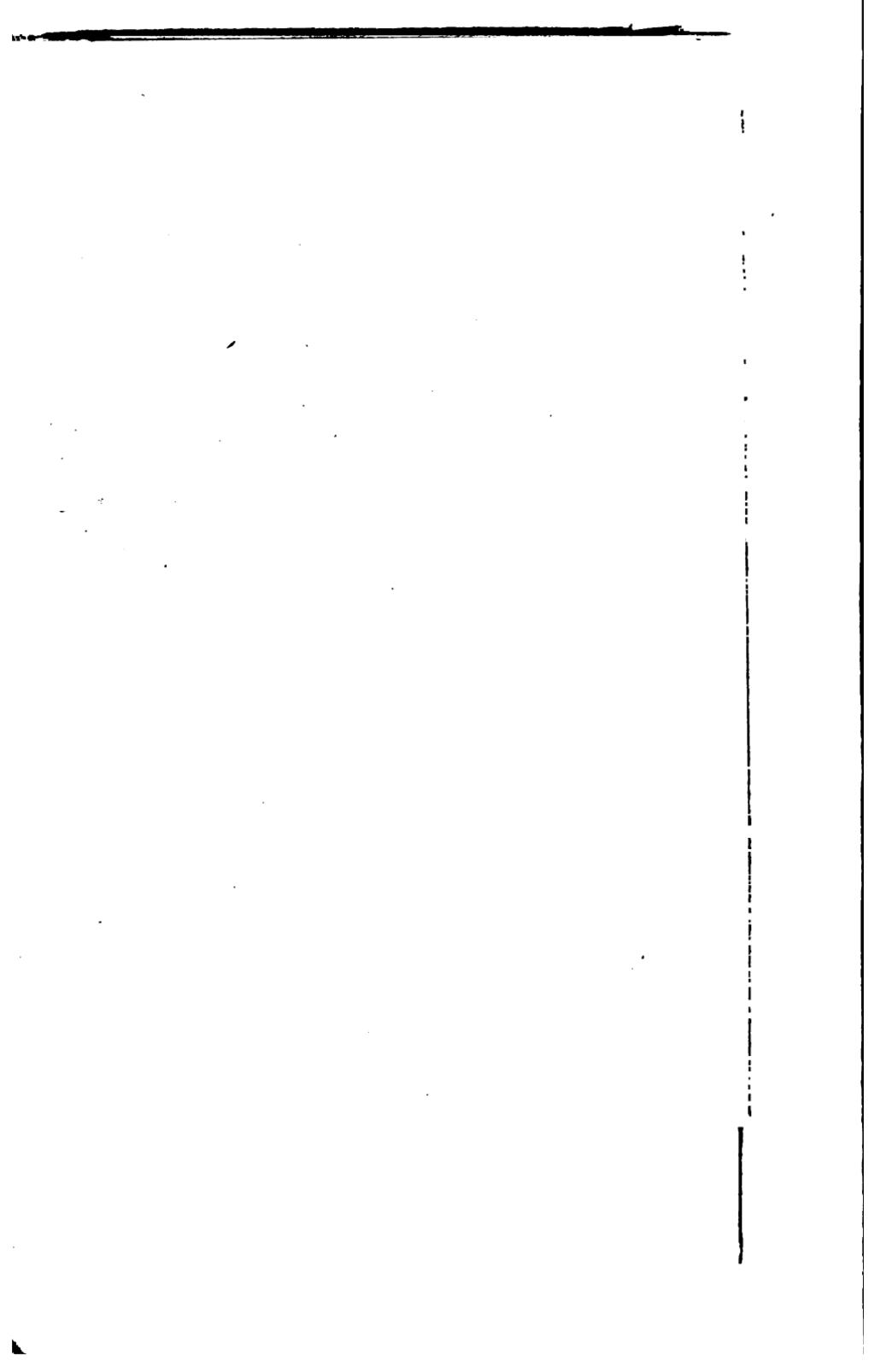
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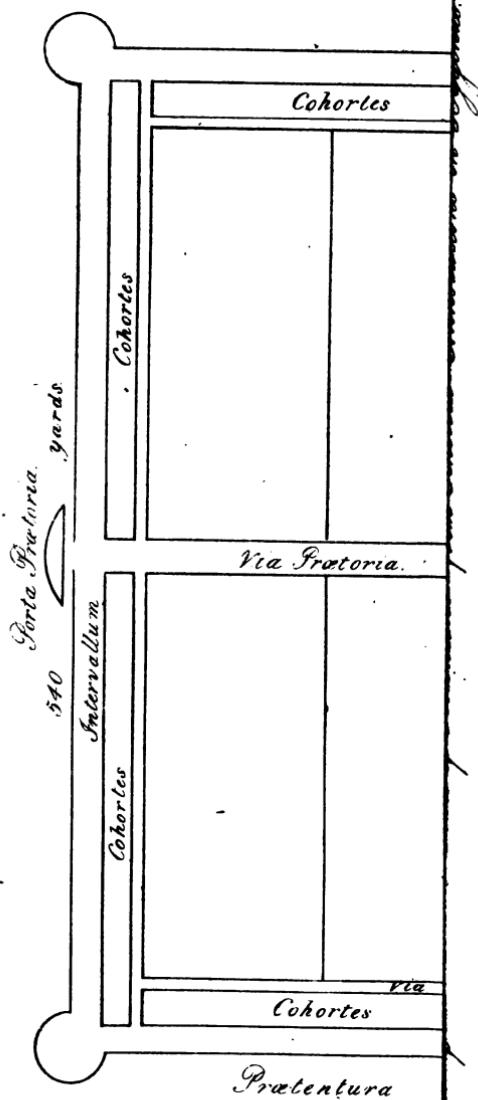


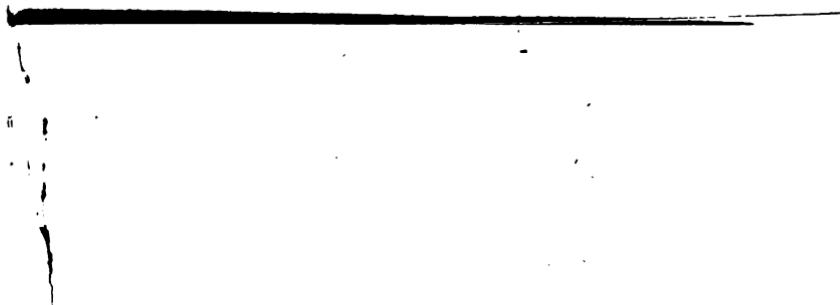


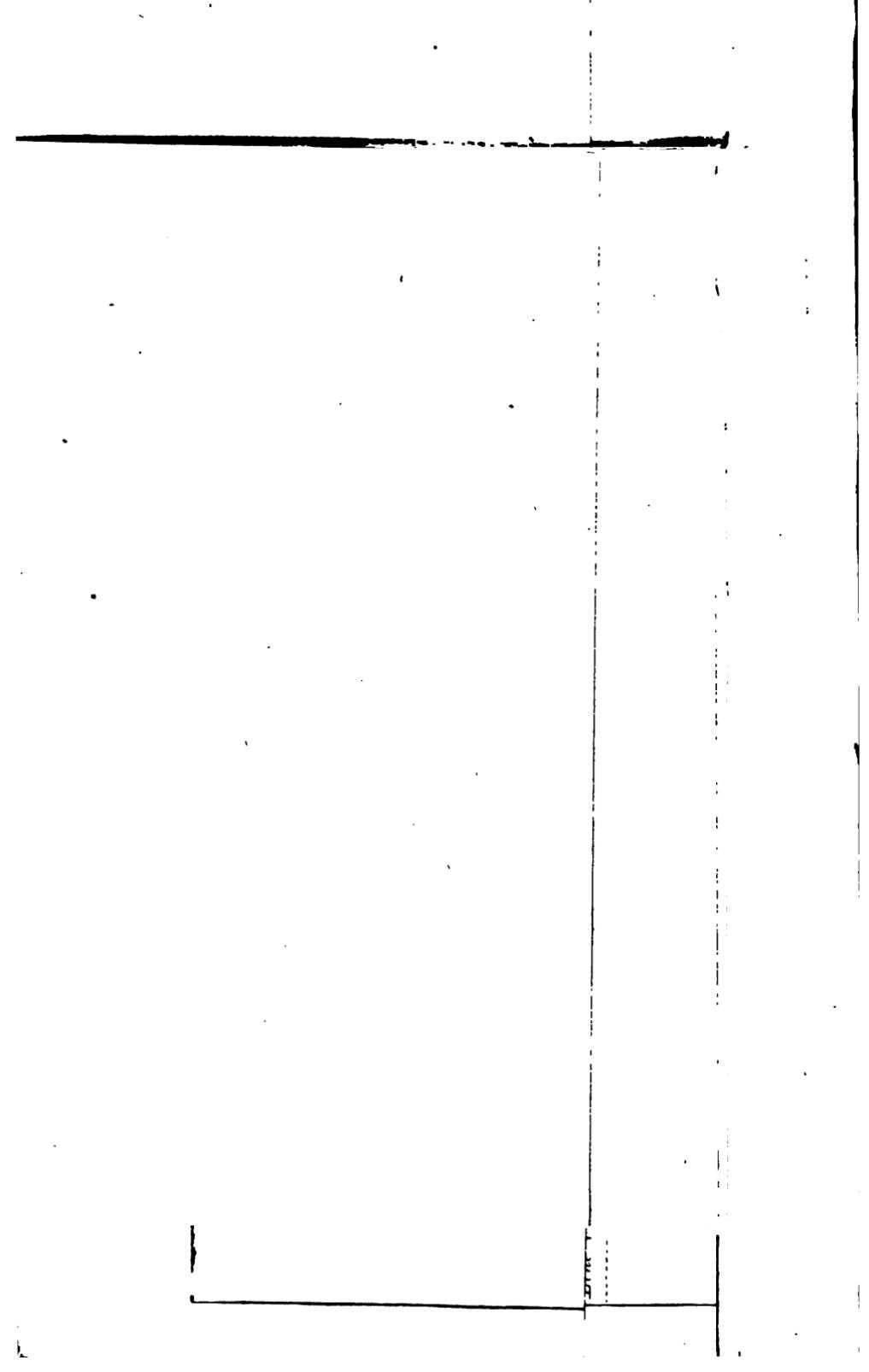




*Castra Trium Legionum cum Supplementis.*







AN

## ACCOUNT OF THE ROMAN ROAD

FROM

### ALLCHESTER TO DORCHESTER.

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THE remains of antiquity, such as are now to be described, are so liable to destruction from the progress of agriculture, and other changes on the surface of the soil, that it may be useful to record the present state of them, even although they have been often noticed before. Let this be my excuse (if excuse be wanted) for including in the following account many observations which others have made in some parts of the same subject. But the same process which is daily in operation to destroy some antiquities discovers others: the plough has brought to light many an unknown Roman work. But a great part of these is likely soon to be lost and forgotten, unless put on record; it is important therefore that such notices should be collected, and that this should be done at the time when the discovery is made. Every accurate description of local antiquities, whether it be the actual condition of those which have been long known, or the discoveries of new remains, may, therefore, be of service to the general interests of history; and all who have opportunity for it, might be encouraged to examine and observe such matters of antiquity as fall in their way, by the thought, that while they amuse themselves by such pursuits, they may also

B

contribute something to increase our knowledge of the early state of our country. With this view I lay before the Society the following sketch of objects which are within the reach of all to examine.

But I wish first to acknowledge what I owe to the kindness of friends. Of the Rev. Walter Lucas Brown, rector of Wendlebury, and late Student of Christ Church, I am bound to say that he has not so much *assisted* me in the work as *shared* it with me, and the authorship really belongs in part to him. I consider that very much of the value of what is here produced is due to his excellent drawing of the ground of Allchester, and the information about it with which he supplied me. I am much indebted to the Rev. John Wilson, Fellow of Trinity College, for many interesting facts and observations, which I should not have had without him. His assistance has been of great service to my inquiries in many respects; and it has been given always most freely and kindly, which I acknowledge with pleasure. And I have also to thank the Camden Professor of Ancient History, Dr. Cardwell, Principal of Alban Hall, for some additional information, and references to authors with which I was not acquainted: and other friends also, whom I need not name here. Let me add an acknowledgment of the great help derived from the Ordnance Map. This excellent work has now given facilities to antiquarian researches of this kind such as they never had before; while it has, at the same time, collected together a great store of notices of the remains of antiquity, in a more accessible shape than formerly belonged to them, and preserved them in a record which will remain for purposes of

history, even although the increase of population and cultivation of the soil should obliterate every trace of the relics themselves from the surface of the country.

---

THE Roman Road running across Otmoor from north to south has long been known. In Camden's time the tradition of the country confounded it with the Akeman-street, and he described it by that name <sup>a</sup>. Since this it has been observed by many antiquaries, and it is still familiarly known in the neighbourhood as "the old Roman Road." It has generally been thought to end at Allchester, to the north, although Camden was told that it was carried on to Banbury. Whither it went in the opposite direction, to the south, was for some time a doubtful question with antiquaries: the account given to Camden by the people of the country was, that it reached from Banbury to Wallingford. Plot also supposed that it went to Wallingford, crossing the Thames at Bensington, where he thought that there was a portion of it visible to the west of the church, under the name of Medler's Bank <sup>b</sup>. Stukely con-

<sup>a</sup> Camden (Dobuni) Oxfordshire.

<sup>b</sup> Natur. Hist. of Oxfordshire, 27. p. 317, &c. I cannot find that the name of Medler's Bank is known at Bensington now. There is a *very faint* trace of something like a continued ridge running near the turnpike road all the way from Dorchester to Bensington in a straight line between the two churches, but it is too slight to found any speculation upon. If this however really was the line of a Roman road, it was a branch leading off from Dorchester, not in the straight direction of a continuation of the road from Allchester, but bending with a considerable angle from it.

jected that it was carried to Sandford, and crossed the river there<sup>c</sup>. Warton describes it as connecting Allchester and Dorchester; although it does not appear from his account of it, how much he had traced himself, and how much he derived from the information of others; and his description of some part of it, where he goes a little into details, does not agree either with the present form or the place of it<sup>d</sup>.

It seems evident that this road must be the same which is mentioned by Richard of Cirencester in the route from York to (near) Southampton. In the eighteenth iter Richard gives the distance from *Ælia Castra* (Allchester) to Dorocina (Dorchester) as fifteen miles; and the editor in his comment on the place observes, that the road “runs plainly almost all the way to Dorchester<sup>e</sup>.” The true distance

<sup>c</sup> *Itinerarium Curiosum, Iter II.*

<sup>d</sup> *Specimen of a History of Oxfordshire*, p. 57.

<sup>e</sup> The following is from the London edition, 1809, of Richard of Cirencester, p. 164.

Iter XVIII.			Sites of the Stations.
Ab Eboraco per medium insulæ			From York through the middle of the island to Bittern.
Clausentum usque, sic :			
		Corrected numbers.	
Legiolio	m. p. <b>xxi</b>	<b>xxi</b>	Castleford.
Ad Fines	<b>xviii</b>	<b>xxiiii</b>	Temple Brough on the bank of the Don.
.....	<b>xvi</b>	<b>xvi</b>	Tapton Hill near Chesterfield.
.....	<b>xvi</b>	<b>xii</b>	Camp near Pankridge.
Derventione	<b>xvi</b>	<b>xii</b>	Little Chester.
Ad Trivonam	<b>xii</b>	<b>xii</b>	Berry Farm in Branston.
Etoceto	<b>xii</b>	<b>xii</b>	Wall.
Manduesuedo	<b>xvi</b>	<b>xvi</b>	Manceter.
Benonnis	<b>xii</b>	<b>xii</b>	High Cross.
Triponio	<b>xi</b>	<b>xi</b>	Near Dove Bridge.
Isannavaria	<b>xii</b>	<b>x</b>	Burnt Walls.
Brinavis	<b>xii</b>	<b>xii</b>	Black Ground near Chipping Norton.
<i>Ælia Castra</i>	<b>xvi</b>	<b>xvi</b>	Alesthorpe near Bicester.
Dorocina	<b>xv</b>	<b>xvi</b>	Dorchester.
Tamesi	<b>vi</b>	<b>vi</b>	On the Thames.
Vindomi	<b>xv</b>	<b>xx</b>	Silchester.
<i>Calleva</i>			
Clausento	<b>xxxxvi</b>	<b>xxxxv</b>	Bittern near Southampton.

from Allchester to Dorchester by this line is sixteen miles, one more than Richard reckons ; but this variation is inconsiderable, being much less than what is found in many of the numerals of the old itineraries. About half of it has been traced by the antiquaries above-named. The course of the road can be seen on examination every where, except in a few portions, so small, that the direction is easily recovered ; and these intervals lie towards the middle of the whole distance ; so that at each end it is most plain.

To begin then from the north, the road passes through the middle of the area of Allchester in the form of a high ridge, which is continued through the meadows to the south, in a course a little westward of Merton. It is now about twenty yards in width, being measured over the curve of the surface, which was the regular width of the *Via Prætoria* in a camp<sup>1</sup>, and about two feet and a half high :

Instead of Chipping Norton we should read Chipping Warden, which is half a mile from the Black grounds, the supposed site of Brinavis. See Mr. Beesley's History of Banbury, p. 27. But even this seems too far to the westward for the direct line. If it were certain where Isannavaria was, we could guess the site of Brinavis with more probability. Gale supposed that Isannavaria (or Isanta Varia, (Richard, Iter 1,) or Isannavatia, or Isannavenna, or Bennaventum) was Weedon near Daventry. (ad Antonin. Iter Brit. VI. and VIII. See also Horsley Brit. Roman. III. 2. p. 436.) This is in the right direction, being about north of Allchester ; and the straight line thither would pass nearly through Brackley. Camden thought that Stony Stratford might be Isannavaria. Cattieuchlan. (Bedfordshire.)

<sup>1</sup> Item via quæ dicit ad Portam Prætoriam (a Prætorio sine dubio via Prætoria dicitur) latitudine, ut supra, pedum sexaginta. Hygin. de Castram.

but small portions of it have been removed in some places. In Stukely's time it seems to have been larger; for he describes it as having been “<sup>g</sup> elevated into a ridg of a hundred foot bredth, and two little ditches all along the sides<sup>h</sup>.” This was when much of this country was not enclosed: there are no ditches now, and the road has plainly been dug through and carried away every here and there. When opened in a part near Allchester, it was found to be made of broken stones laid on a bed of black mould. The bed of stones may be found in any part by thrusting a stick a few inches into the turf on it: but probably the greater part of the stones which covered it have been removed, even where they are most abundant: for it has been used as a stone-quarry by the farmers of the neighbourhood in more than one place.

Merton is about two miles south of Allchester; and beyond this point the road has now disappeared from the surface for some distance. But following the same course, it is found again at a stony ford over a small brook, by the quantity of stones in the clay both in the bank and at the bottom<sup>i</sup>. And immediately afterwards the place of it appears again in the name of Strettle (Street hill)<sup>k</sup>, just across the brook to the south. From hence, as it

<sup>g</sup> Iter II. p. 38. ed. 1724.

<sup>h</sup> This seems to have been common. Horsley says, “circumstances incline me to think that the more ancient military ways were high raised and well entrenched on each side to keep them dry.” Britann. Rom. I. 8. p. 121.

<sup>i</sup> Stukely describes it in his time as “making fords over the brooks.” Ibid.

<sup>k</sup> Horsley Britann. Roman. III. 2. p. 391.

passes to the west of Fencot, there is no ridge or bank visible to mark it ; but the course may still be indistinctly traced on the surface at intervals by the stones spread about ; which, although they have been removed from their original position, yet indicate that the road was near.

But after crossing the second lane from Fencot, about three miles from Allchester, the line is not only visible and open, but is still a road, known by the country people as *the Roman road*, crossing Otmoor to Beckley. There is about a mile and a half of it here in the moor, part of which is still plainly raised above the level of the ground on each side, and covered with a firm layer of stones. In other places the stones have been removed, and may be seen scattered about in great numbers lying near the road. It is said by the country people that all the stones visible in this part were taken from the Roman road, none having been brought down from a distance since.

The road then leaves Otmoor for Beckley, not by the present road (which at Beckley is called the Otmoor lane), but passing through the field to the left of the lane, and more nearly in a straight line with the road through the moor than the lane is, (for the lane bends to the westward at the gate which comes out of the moor,) it runs along nearly parallel to the lane, about from thirty to twenty yards distant to the eastward from the hedge of the lane<sup>1</sup>. In this part stones are turned up in the

<sup>1</sup> This field in which the old road is now found was enclosed before the rest of Otmoor ; and in consequence the thoroughfare of the old road was stopped in this part, and the way out of the

drains in the field, or by digging about a foot deep. A little farther on, the old road falls into the present lane, coming out of the field just described at the gate by which it is entered from the lane. It then crosses the lane in a slanting direction, and soon afterwards appears on the right hand or western side, at first near to the hedge, but gradually diverging into the fields on that side, until the turns of the lane, as it approaches the village, bring the two roads nearer together again. In these fields the old road may be plainly traced on the ploughed ground by the stones, which although broken up and loosened, so that there is no longer any thing like pavement, are strewn so thickly in one line on the clayey stoneless soil, that scarcely any beholder could fail to perceive the evidence which they give. Even above the ploughed fields, where the land is now in pasture, the stones are visible enough on the ground to shew the line farther in ascending the hill. At the last fence before coming to the first cottages, the old road is thirteen paces from the hedge of the lane: at this distance, in the field next to the cottages, on the south side of the fence, the layer of stones firmly bedded together is visible at about eight inches underground. This is exactly in a line with the stones scattered in the fields below, and seems plainly to mark the old road. Above this it is not easily traced; for the ground about that part has been all moved. The tradition of the country is

moor turned to that part which was still unenclosed. This accounts for the present lane having left the course of the old road here.

that it passes by some willow trees which stand out in the field near the cottages. Thence it must have gone through the orchards behind the cottages gradually ascending the hollow: the exact line of it there is not to be discerned: but there is much broken stone scattered about, great part of which has the appearance of having been a good deal worn, like stone which has been laid on a used way; and this is the case with all the stone which I have seen found on any part of this line. Near this place are the traces of another piece of road covered likewise with stone. These appeared a few years ago in making a hedge on the left hand, or eastern side, of the present road or lane, near the first cottages on that side: a continued layer of stones was found running from the cottages along the garden hedge; from whence it slants down the hill, across the field, about in a north-west direction, towards the present lane and the old road: it may be found by digging about six or eight inches under the surface; but it is lost before it meets the present road, and cannot be traced on beyond it to the old road. (See A in the map.) It has been conjectured that this was the course of the Roman road: but it is too much out of the straight line. For it would have turned off from the direction which has been plainly traced hitherto, to go half way up the hill at the least accessible part, and then must have turned again and gone round to fall into the cut which leads to the top of the hill. It is more likely that it was a road leading up to some house, whether Roman or English; for Beckley was once a place of importance. On the opposite side of our road here stood the ancient palace, which was the

seat of the chief manor of the honour of St. Walerie, and the favourite residence of the earls of Cornwall in the thirteenth century<sup>m</sup>; the site of which is still marked, as Kennett describes it, by the stone pigeon-house, although it probably will not be so much longer. (See B in the map.) And foundations of buildings are still found in digging around here. So that there might very probably have been either dwellings, to which this branch of a road led, or fortifications commanding the passage from the valley up the hill. It is possible that there might have been a Roman settlement here, for there were many such in the neighbourhood.

The road goes out of Beckley by a deep cut through the hill, to the south of the village at the eastern end, near where the lane turns out of the street by the pond. The actual line of the road passes along the deepest part of the cut through a garden and premises of a house; but a few yards above this a gate opens from the lane into a bridle-way through a hollow, which hollow is the line of the road, and which emerges through a narrow notch in the limestone rock into the level field above. This cut is remarkable, both because it shews how the Romans carried a road over a steep hill, and also because it still preserves, apparently, the original dimensions: the narrowest part of the cut may be supposed to be the breadth of the old way, that is, about wide enough for a modern waggon: which was probably a considerable width for a Roman road; and is wider than some of the streets in Pompeii.

<sup>m</sup> White Kennett, *Parochial Antiq.* vol. i. p. 416. 509. 512.  
Oxf. 1818.

Hence the road passes (used as a bridle-way now) across the road which leads to the New Inn, into the field on the other side, then skirts the eastern end of Stow Wood, and comes out again by the public house, the Royal Oak, on the road from Wheatley to Islip (the old Worcester road) just opposite to the stone which marks the boundary of Stow Wood. For a few yards of the part which skirts the wood, the road seems even now to keep the original form and structure. It is there a high ridge covered with a compact coat of rough stones of unequal sizes, irregularly laid, but firmly packed together, and apparently much worn. (See C in the map.)

After crossing the Islip road the old line is to be traced through ploughed fields. The direction is easily marked: for from the rising ground at the end of Stow Wood the continuation of the road ascending the hill towards Headington Quarries from Bayswater is plainly seen, and the straight line to that point is the course of the Roman Road. If followed in this direction it is to be found at first in the hedge-rows: but a little farther on it becomes very perceptible in the form of a slight ridge running across several fields. It falls into the road from Beckley to Oxford again, near the turning off to Stanton St. John, at a gate opening into a field, on the top of the hill, where stone has been dug; and the course of it across that field may plainly be seen by a person looking from that gate towards Stow Wood. The ridge runs across the field in that direction to a stile<sup>n</sup>.

<sup>n</sup> Mr. Wilson has been so good as to furnish me with the following notice of the grounds through which it passes after

From hence it runs in the line of the turnpike road, down the hill by Stafford's (Stane-ford's<sup>o</sup>, the farm on the right) to Bayswater (Bayard's water), and ascends again. But towards the top of the hill the turnpike road turns away from it to the west, and it appears in the field on the left (east) side of the present road: there it passes through the corner of an enclosure, and comes into the Wycombe road at a large white gate, through which is the entrance to the cottage close by, called Sandhill. It is very conspicuous where it crosses the Wycombe road, being marked by a high ridge in the bank of the hedge, exactly opposite the white gate just mentioned; at which ridge it enters the field called the Quarry field. The rising of the ground is very visible for some distance in the field, and is thickly covered with loose stones. Farther on, the ground has been levelled by ploughing; but on the opposite side of the field, in the same line, the ridge is seen again, standing up conspicuously in the hedge.

To the south of the quarry field the soil has been all moved in the line of the old road, by the quarries and clay-pits, and for about half a mile it is now quite lost. It appears again on the south side of the road which goes up Shotover hill. In the field behind the last brick-ground on the right hand side, just before the beginning of the ascent of

crossing the road from Stow Wood. Upper and Lower Paddock, by the east hedge; Campsfield; enters Stanton St. John parish in Breach Closes, by the south-east hedge; Parr's Plot, where it is very evident by the hedge; Upper Stafford Grove; which is the field last named in the text, adjoining the turnpike road, and crossed by the ridge.

<sup>o</sup> Or perhaps, Stow-ford.

the hill, it may be faintly traced by a line of rising ground, which runs from the north-west corner of the field by the brick-ground, nearly parallel to the west hedge, but slanting a little upwards, towards a gate which enters the wood <sup>p</sup>. This is all which is now visible : but it is not long since it existed here in the original form. It is but about ten years ago that several cart-loads of the stone of which the road was made were removed from this very field, and used in making underground drains <sup>q</sup>. Within the memory of persons now living, the original covering of the road remained also in part of the ground by the quarries. It has been described to me by one who often saw it, as a layer of unequally sized stones, many of them large, roughly packed together : which is much the same kind of thing as is still to be seen at the east end of Stow Wood.

In the wood there is no trace of it to be found, nor onwards, until we come to the south side of the east end of Bullingdon Green. According to the course followed hitherto, it would lead across Bullingdon Green from N. to S., just on the east side of the little watercourse which crosses it : but nothing is visible of it until, on leaving the Green <sup>r</sup>, a field-road appears running straight towards Baldon. Where this road first leaves the Green, a few yards

<sup>p</sup> Plot traced it here into the wood, and no farther. Nat. Hist. Oxfordsh. 27.

<sup>q</sup> This I was told by a man who was employed in the work.

<sup>r</sup> There is another faint trace : where the road to Horsepath crosses our line, and is excavated slightly for a short distance, it seems in one spot to have been cut through a bank, or ridge ; for just in that place the soil thrown up on the side of the road rises to a higher mound than elsewhere.

to the east of the little water-course, there are indications of a considerable rising or ridge in the ground, as if there had once been a high bank which had been ploughed down: and this character appears again in many places as it is traced onwards.

This field-road is doubtless the line of the Roman road, which after leaving Bullingdon Green passes for a short distance through the open fields, then falls into a lane, and after crossing first the road to Garsington, and next the road to Chiselhampton, where a solitary house stands on the latter <sup>s</sup>, enters a gate and falls into the bridle-way through Sandford Brake to Baldon, keeping the same straight course all the way. Between the Chiselhampton road and Sandford Brake the rising of the ground in some parts of the line still indicates that there has been a ridge, and this is generally to be found here a few feet on the right hand side (west) of the present way. In the field nearest to the Brake a good deal of stone is to be seen in the soil, and under the surface; especially where the drains between the ridges of the ploughed land come down, and cross the line of the road <sup>t</sup>. Beyond this it comes into what is

<sup>s</sup> This house is on the border of Cowley parish, which seems to agree with Warton's notice of our road: for he says it skirts the east of Cowley, which is true if he meant the *parish*. But he says, it is then of great height and width for a certain distance, and then suddenly disappears; which description does not at all agree with present appearances. I cannot help suspecting that he mistook for it a road with a bank going southward from the west end of Bullingdon Green, which skirts Cowley *village*, and ends suddenly. This is half a mile too far to the west, if this is what he meant. Specimen of a History of Oxfordshire, p. 55.

<sup>t</sup> From this part "two or three miles north-west of Balden-

called Blackber's lane, which is a broad green drift-way; containing no sign of any ridge or bank. But many stones appear at intervals all along this part; some of considerable size, the natural soil being clay; and it does not appear that stone has been brought there of late: it is probable, therefore, that these were the materials of the Roman Road.

The line emerges from this lane, and crosses the corner of a ploughed field, and then ascends the hill, by a line of trees, to Baldon. The exact course of it would have been in a straight line from the end of Blackber's lane to the trees at the foot of the hill; and it is certainly remarkable, that, supposing this to have been the case, there is nothing like a line of stones to be seen scattered in that direction, as in the fields below Beckley. But when it is known how the stones in the field by the brick-ground under Shotover hill have been removed, (and there is now not the slightest trace of them there,) it need not be matter of surprise that they have been taken away here also; especially as there is the same reason for it. For the ground is a stiff clay, and lies low; and the stones would be very useful for making drains.

At the top of the hill the line falls into the public road (to Nuneham), a few yards to the right of the gate of the bridle-way, as the rising of the ground

heath," Warton thought there was "a diverticular branch" to be traced going off to the westward to Radley, crossing the river and continued beyond it. There is a crooked by-way to Sandford from hence; but I cannot discern any mark of a Roman origin, nor indeed of antiquity, in it. But, by the way, Warton's description does not determine very precisely where we are to look for this "diverticular branch."

shews. It must then have run nearly in the line of the road for a little way, but lying rather on the left side it presently fell into the premises of the cottage where the road to the left hand turns off, ran a few yards down this latter road, and then fell into a narrow dirty lane which has a straight direction to the village of Marsh Baldon. This lane coincides exactly with the line of the road : it is cut deep into the level of the ground, like a road once much used, although now it is disused, and scarcely passable ; and in the wettest parts it has a hard bottom of large stones. It has moreover been long known by tradition as *the Roman Road*.

From the lane (which ends in Marsh Baldon village) the ~~line~~ passes along the road on the east side of the green of the village, until the modern road turns, just at the corner of Baldon Green, to the left, nearly at a right angle. Here the Roman line is lost : it would have gone straight on, probably, through some inclosures of Sir H. Willoughby's ; and then it seems to have bent a little to the left hand, or east, and so slanting off to have fallen into the course of the present road from Baldon to Dorchester across the fields. For nearly the distance of a mile the course of this road turns out of the straight line by a curve to the eastward : it then returns again, and for the rest of the way to Dorchester it has plainly the character of a Roman road, being perfectly straight, and in great part raised with a high ridge, of which the slope reaches several yards into the fields on each side.

It must be confessed there is some uncertainty about the exact course of our road as it leaves Baldon. The evidence for that line which I have

marked just here is only the general direction, and the existence of a modern field-road in part of it. But it is remarkable that the nature of the ground here seems to offer a satisfactory reason for this slight deviation from the precise course. There is a water-course just in the line where the straight course would run; and the course which has been marked avoids this by turning round the head of it, and escapes crossing it at all. Indeed the course seems so contrived as to fall in with the smallest possible number of these drains in crossing over this ground, which is still wet and swampy in many places. And it must be remembered that the surface was in a very different state when the Romans occupied it, from what it is now. What is now a trifling drain might then have caused a considerable bog, and made a serious impediment to the course of a road.

Our road has now been traced from Allchester for sixteen miles to Dorchester, which is well known to have been a Roman station<sup>u</sup>. Whither it led beyond this is uncertain. It might have passed through Wallingford, as the tradition of the country reported it to Camden. Gale denied that Wallingford was a Roman station, because no Roman antiquities had been found there<sup>x</sup>: but other antiquaries since him have ascertained that Roman coins have

<sup>u</sup> Horsley Britann. Roman. II. 3. Leland says of it, "In the closis and feeldes that lye southly on the town that now standith be founde Numismata Romanorum of gold, silver, and brasse." Itiner. vol. ii. fol. 11. ed. Hearne. See also Skelton Antiq. of Oxfordshire, &c.

<sup>x</sup> Gale ad Antonin. Iter Britann. VII.

been found<sup>y</sup>. But Wallingford was not the next station to Dorchester in the Itinerary, which Richard calls Tamesi: for the distance there given is six miles, whereas Wallingford is distant but three. No certain trace of a Roman road leading from Dorchester in any direction which could be called a continuation of that which has been traced hitherto is yet known. The course of the road from Alchester points to Moulsford and Streatley<sup>z</sup>, through Satwell and Mackney. The straight line joining these points with Dorchester would pass over the ridge by Brightwell Barrow, to the east of Sinodun Hill (the ancient camp or fortification of earth-work); and there is a farm-way now visible on the ridge, descending on Satwell, about in this direction, by a line where the hill is scarped with a deep cut. This, from the look of it, seems likely enough to have been an ancient road: but there is nothing about it to shew that it was Roman, unless it be the straightness of it, and the coincidence with the other line<sup>a</sup>. I have not examined the

<sup>y</sup> Lysons' *Berkshire*, Introd. p. 202, &c.

<sup>z</sup> Lysons (*Berkshire*, p. 201.) refers to a paper read by Dr. Beke, Professor of Modern History at Oxford, to the Society of Antiquaries, Feb. 9. 1804, on the 18th Iter of Richard. I have not seen this, and therefore do not know in how much of what I have here said he may have anticipated me.

<sup>a</sup> If the road went to the south by this line, it passed too far from Sinodun to have any communication with that work, whether camp or town: and I cannot find any trace of a way looking like a Roman way leading off from this to Sinodun. This favours the opinion that it was not a Roman work. Camden says it certainly was, because Roman coins are ploughed up there (*Atrebati*, *Barkshire*). Lysons says they have not been

ground to the south of this. If the road passed here, it might be visible perhaps between Satwell and Cholsey: beyond Cholsey (if it was there) it would probably be the line of the present road.

found there lately (Berksh. Introd.) From the style of the work no one would suppose that the entrenchments of Sinodun were built by the same people who built Allchester: nor does it seem likely that the Romans would have wasted their labour in raising such huge banks, when they could defend a low wall against any enemies in this country. It seems more probable that it was a British city, of which it formed the citadel, while the plain below on the other side of the river, cut off and defended by that remarkable double wall which joins the Isis with the Thames, and so encloses all the ground between them, was the area of the city. This low position, and the confluence of the rivers, might well give the place a name from *Dor* (water): and it is known that the Britons often chose wet ground and marshes for the sites of their cities. On this supposition Dorchester would have been a British city when the Romans invaded the country; and these which we now see might have been the entrenchments which the Romans stormed and took. It is possible that the Romans might have encamped sometimes on Sinodun hill, or occupied it otherwise, which would account for some coins having been found. See Hearne, Roperi Vita Th. Mori &c. p. 258. It should be observed that there is just such another work, except that the banks or walls are more obliterated, about three miles from Sinodun, at Aston Tirrel, near Blewberry; it is called Blewburton (burg-town, i. e. castle-town). These two are so much alike, that it might be supposed they were the work of the same people: but I never heard that Blewburton was thought to be a Roman work, nor that Roman remains have been found near it. It is worth observing too that this is on the line of a branch of the Icknield way, which was probably an old British road (see Lysons as above). I do not know whether Letcombe castle, which is further to the westward on the line of the Icknield (or Ickleton) way, may be another instance of a fortification not Roman: I should conjecture it was of the same origin as the other two, forming one of a line of settlements of the same people.

Streatley would not be much more than six miles from Dorchester in a straight line, and might therefore suit for the Tamesi of Richard. On a conjecture we cannot imagine any place more likely: for here the Iknield way, which led across the island from east to west, crosses the Thames; and thus the Roman street from north to south would intersect it: and the name Streatley is alone strong evidence that a Roman road passed through the place<sup>b</sup>.

But we will now return to the other extremity of our line, and give some account of Allchester. There is no need here to go into the question about the origin and meaning of the name. Some have explained it to be Allecti Castra, and supposed that it was built by Allectus in the war against Carausius: some that it was Alauna, one of the stations mentioned in the Itinerary of Ravennas: others that the name was no more than the Ald-ceaster, the "old camp<sup>c</sup>:" Richard of Cirencester, as we have seen, gives it the name of *Ælia Castra*<sup>d</sup>: and if that

<sup>b</sup> When the cut for the Great Western railway was made, there was found near Streatley the site of a villa, with pavement, and other indications of a Roman origin. It seemed probable from the appearance of the place that this had been destroyed by violence. I was told by a friend who examined it carefully, that it was quite plain that the ground within the enclosure of the villa had been saturated with blood. Concerning the Iknield way, or Ickleton street, or, as it is called now in some parts of the country, the Hackney way, see Lyons, Berkshire, *Introd.*

<sup>c</sup> See Camden, Plot, Stukely, White Kennett, Dunkin's *History of Bicester*, Beesley's *History of Banbury*.

<sup>d</sup> *Ælia* was a name often given to places by the Romans (as to the town on the site of Jerusalem). In Britain we find *Pons Ælii*, which Horsley judged to be Newcastle: there were

was the Roman name, it would be most probable that Allchester was derived from it. It stands on the road from Oxford to Bicester, which passes along the northern boundary (wall) of it; and against that part stands the eleventh mile-stone from Oxford. Mr. Brown's drawing of the camp and ground adjacent is made with so great accuracy, that very little description of the present appearance of it is required. It is, as the plan shews, an irregular square of about three hundred and sixty yards. The ridges which mark the outer walls, as well as those in the line of the streets which crossed the camp at right angles, are plainly visible. It is also not difficult to trace certain divisions of the ground, where the different compartments of the camp would have been marked off, as we may suppose; all of which are bounded by straight lines at right angles, or parallel to each other. These are all laid down in the plan with the greatest exactness by Mr. Brown.

Roman coins, fragments of pottery, tessellæ, bricks, stones which might have been used for pavements, bones, and other relics, have been found in immense quantities all over the area of the camp for many years; and they are still often found, although not so numerous as they were some years ago. Mr. Brown dug up two copper coins of Vespasian this last autumn, and two small vases in pieces, of which he found so many, that he joined them together and made nearly two entire vases; besides various other fragments, among which were also cohors *Ælia Classica*, and cohors *Ælia Dæorum*. These titles were probably taken, as Horsley supposed, from the emperor Adrian's name *Ælius*. *Horsl. Brit. Rom.* I. 7. p. 104.

pieces of earthenware with different stamps on them, as BIRR—, DAGODUNUS, CUCCII, and another illegible ; these were probably the names of the makers. The coins which are to be found there are well known to the country people, among whom they go by the name of "Allchester bits." They are almost all copper, of various ages ; beside those of Vespasian, I have seen them bearing the inscriptions of Antoninus, Faustina, Caracalla, Constantinus, &c.

The place was a station on the Akeman street, the great Roman road from London to Bath : and thus the road to Dorchester must have formed a line of communication between the country of the Thames and the valley about Oxford with the great line of posts running to the westward. For the road which intersects Allchester from north to south is the continuation of the road which we have traced to Dorchester : this passes through the middle of the camp, and proceeds northward, the Bicester turnpike road falling into it where it goes out of the north boundary wall. The road which crosses this, passing through the camp from east to west, is a continuation of the line of the Akeman street, which enters Allchester on the east, but is not carried on beyond it to the west : it seems to have turned and gone out of the camp by the road to the north, and then afterwards to have turned again westward, and so to have fallen into the present line of the Akeman street from Chesterton.

For the Akeman street, coming from the eastward over Blackthorne hill in the line of the present London road to Bicester, turns away from that road at Wretchwick ; and passing to the south of the road

through a farm-yard, and thence into a field (not into the lane), crosses the corner of the field, (where the ridge of it is very plain,) then falls into the lane on the south side of the field, slants across this, and is presently found on the other side of it in the ploughed land above the lane, to the south, where the course is very plainly marked by the stones in the soil; then, as the lane bends, it falls into the lane again, which keeps on close under the north side of Gravenhill wood, until it comes down nearly in a straight line on the stream from Bicester at the place called Langford; from whence there is an evident road made of large stones up to the centre of the eastern boundary of Allchester, at (A) in the plan. Thus a line of road is brought from the Akeman street, by a *very slight* deflexion from the former course, into the camp at Allchester. But the western portion of Akeman street runs on in a straight line from Chesterton; so that if the road necessarily came through Allchester, there would have been a considerable turn to the northward again to get to Chesterton. The straight line joining the two portions of the Akeman street, from Wretchwick to Chesterton, would pass half a mile to the north of Allchester. But although Allchester lay thus much out of the direct line of the Akeman street, and although the supposition that this street actually passed through the camp involves the assertion that it made a turn at a right angle to the north, before it resumed the course to the west, yet still it seems probable that it did pass by this crooked line, and that Allchester was actually on the Akeman street. For there does not appear any trace which I can find, on a careful examination of

the surface of the ground, of a line of Roman road between Chesterton and the part of the Akeman street to the north of Gravenhill wood in the direction of Wretchwick. The part of the Bicester road from Allchester as far as Chesterton lane is plainly the line of the Roman road ; for it is exactly in the direction of the road through the camp from south to north. Chesterton lane is also probably the line of a Roman road : in cutting a ditch there lately many coins and other Roman relics have been found ; there are appearances also of a stony ridge running alongside of the road for some distance, where a space is left between the present road and the hedge on the south side, which might be the ancient way. And the road through Bicester, which turns away from the exact northern direction towards the east at Chesterton lane, is considered a Roman road, and laid down as such beyond Bicester in the Ordnance map. Therefore, upon the whole, it seems likely that the present roads may keep exactly the ancient course where they diverge, the one up Chesterton lane, the other to Bicester ; the former being the return to the line of the Akeman street, the other the continuation of our road from Dorchester towards the north. And it may be observed, that there is now to be seen in the bank of the ditch close to the bridge where Chesterton lane turns off, a mass of broken packed and worn stone, which looks very like a portion of an old road. But there is no trace of the road having been carried on beyond this in the straight line by which it has been brought so far from Allchester, namely bearing due north. A station so important as Allchester might account for the Akeman street

turning out of the straight line to pass through it : and it was not unusual in Britain for the high roads of the Romans to pass through their camps, or close under the walls. Perhaps too the nature of the ground might be taken into the account as the cause. It seems probable that the line from Gravenhill wood through Allchester would have been the easiest ford across the marsh : near to Bicester there would have been two or three streams to cross, or the valley might have been more swampy in other parts than here. I am happy to have this opinion confirmed by Mr. Brown, who writes thus : “ It (the Akeman street) *must* have come down to the *ford* (Langford), and either into Allchester or along the lane ; then, making a bend towards Bicester, have turned again into Chesterton lane. You will see by my sketch that the whole course of the stream above the ford is now flooded. There is no raised ground, nor any sign of *hard* ground : the stream is deep, and the meadows like bog.”

Other lines of road have been observed diverging from the neighbourhood of Allchester. Kennet mentions one going off from the Akeman street, near Chesterton, to the north-west to Middleton Stoney ; and another on the east side of the brook, which comes from Bicester, and on the north side of Gravenhill wood, passing to the north-east through Launton. It has also been supposed that the road leading to the south-east from the point in the Akeman street, where it crosses the Bicester brook at Langford, which passes between Merton and Ambrosden towards Boarstall, was a Roman road.

On comparing the area of Allchester with a plan of a Roman camp, the resemblance is evident. For

this purpose I have made a copy of Schelius' plan of a camp from Hyginus, reduced to about the same scale as Mr. Brown's drawing of Allchester, that they might be examined together. From this it appears, that the Akeman street entered the camp at the *Porta Principalis* (A in the plan) on the east, a little to the north of the middle of the east side, and formed the *Via Principalis* (A, B) within the camp; that our road from Dorchester entered the camp at the *Porta Decumana* (M) (so called from the tenth cohorts always stationed there<sup>d</sup>), and passed through it as the *Via Præatoria*, going out again at the *Porta Præatoria* (P) to the north, which was next to the enemy<sup>e</sup>. At the crossing of these two roads was the *Groma* (C), the centre by which the distances of the parts of the camp were regulated, and from which the *Scriptores Gromatici*, the writers on camp measurements, were so called<sup>f</sup>. The rising ground in the form of a ridge (Q, R), parallel to the *Via Principalis*, and to the south of it, seems to mark the place of the *Via Quintana*. The distance (C, Q) between these two roads was the length of the *Latus Prætorii*: and the other ridges (S, T) between them, on the west side of the *Via Præatoria*, may indicate a part of the inclosures of the *Prætorium*, and the quarters of the *Comites Imperatoris*, or of the *Equites Prætoriani*.

The size of the camp at Allchester, compared with Hyginus' dimensions of a camp for three legions and their supplements, shews that it was not designed for a very large army. If three legions and their supplements occupied an area of about 770

<sup>d</sup> Hyginus.

<sup>e</sup> *Porta Præatoria semper hostem spectare debet.* Hygin. ad finem.

<sup>f</sup> Ibid.

yards by 540<sup>g</sup>, Allchester, which is but a square of about 360 yards, could not have held more than one legion. General Roy calculated that the camp of a single legion, without the allies, according to the system of Polybius, would have occupied nearly as large a space: and he has described several Roman camps considerably larger in the north of Britain<sup>h</sup>. The number of men in the legion varied. Polybius speaks of it as either 4000 or 5000 foot<sup>i</sup>, beside 200 or 300 horse, according to circumstances: to which the *Socii* added generally an equal number of foot<sup>j</sup>, and three times as many horse; but sometimes even more than this<sup>k</sup>. Livy mentions legions of 6200 foot and 300 horse<sup>l</sup>. According to this, a legion with the *supplementa* might have contained 10,000 foot and 1200 horse, and upwards: to which must

<sup>g</sup> When Hyginus describes the shape of a camp (as “*tertiata*”), he gives for an example one whose sides shall be 2400 feet by 1600: this, reckoned in yards (of Roman feet), would be 800 by 533. It is probable that he intended here to give the dimensions of the camp for three legions, which he often speaks of elsewhere as if it were a kind of standard measure by which to describe others. Elsewhere he computes 720 feet, or 240 yards, as the greatest length of the “*latus Prætorii*,” which in Allchester seems to have been about 150 yards; and it there bears a larger proportion, apparently, to the other parts than in Hyginus’ camp. I have taken my measure from Schelius’ plan, which is accurate enough for the present purpose.

<sup>h</sup> *Military Antiquities of the Romans in Britain.*

<sup>i</sup> VI. 32. 1. <sup>j</sup> VI. 26. 7.

<sup>k</sup> VI. 32. 3. III. 72. 12. The numbers of the different divisions in the Roman army seem to have been often changed. Josephus says, in speaking of Titus’ army at Cæsarea, that out of twenty-three cohorts ten contained 1000 foot each, the remaining thirteen each 600 foot and 120 horse. *Bell. Judaic.* III. 4. 2.

<sup>l</sup> XXIX. 24.

be added camp followers and attendants in proportion. It is remarkable that the camp at Allchester, while it seems plainly to resemble the camp of Hyginus in the divisions and arrangement of the spaces within, is more like the camp of Polybius in shape<sup>m</sup>; for the latter describes the Roman camp as square<sup>n</sup>, the former as an oblong, which he calls *tertiata*, that is, having the sides of the parallelogram to each other as three to two.

The concurrence of many roads at Allchester leads to the consideration of the question, to what extent had the Romans formed a settlement here? The received opinion of antiquaries, and the tradition of the country lately has been, that Allchester was *a large city*. Greatness is a relative idea; but the opinion of the importance of Allchester is somewhat lowered when we see the dimensions assigned by Hyginus. If a Roman camp for only three legions covered an area of more than 400,000 square yards, Allchester would seem to have been less considerable than some have supposed: at least it could not have contained a civic population besides the troops, nor have been a camp and a city too, which they would consider it to be who call the buildings around it "suburbs." But yet a station of this size might have been important enough to form a centre for many converging lines of road, whether there was a city or not. The bends in the course of the Akeman street, the turning of it up to the north to Chesterton, after it comes out of Allchester, and before it falls again into the straight westerly course, would seem indeed to indicate that there was some

<sup>m</sup> On this subject see Gen. Roy Milit. Antiq. <sup>n</sup> VI. 31. 10.

settlement at Chesterton, rather than at Allchester : unless we suppose that it was carried to the northward there for the sake of finding an easier line for a road to the west than there was from Allchester direct. Camden, in whose time many relics must have been visible which have since been removed, notices Allchester as *desertæ stationis antiquæ paucæ reliquiæ* merely. On the other hand, Mr. Brown has found traces of foundations of buildings not only in the meadow to the west, where the site of what is called the castle has been always conspicuous, but also to the north. But indeed it can hardly be thought that there were not settlements formed around Allchester. So large a body of persons as the camp contained would have drawn together many households for safety and for traffic. Since there were certainly many Roman residences in different parts of the neighbourhood, it is likely some were near the head quarters of the district. Thus there might have been houses, villas, or hamlets around the camp. But as yet there seems not to be proof of the existence of a city. No foundations of walls of solid masonry have been found yet, such as would have been suited for the protection of a city, nor any inscriptions. Stukely, indeed, conjectured that the building, of which the foundation is known and marked in the plan by the name of "the Castle," might have been a temple; but no evidence of this has yet appeared<sup>o</sup>.

It remains to speak of some other Roman works, which may be considered as connected with our line of road from Allchester to Dorchester ; namely,

<sup>o</sup> This was opened at the end of the last century : walls were found, paved floors, and hypocausts. See an account of it in Dunkin's History of Bicester.

another road to the westward, and some stations or settlements in the neighbourhood. This road was first discovered by Plot, who traced part of it, where it was more visible (as it seems) than it now is: but he did not find out whence or whither it led, but only that it disappeared suddenly: and the course and direction of it are still as much a mystery as in his time. Indeed, so little certainty is there about it, that it can hardly be proved that the portions of the line which have been observed are really parts of the same road. I will mention these as they occur, beginning at the north. On the north side of Noke, in a field of Mr. Rogers' farm (called the Upper Log), there is one line across the field, lying about north-west and south-east, in which the corn is observed to be always better than in any other part, more forward in the spring, and better in the crop. In the same straight line, to the south-east, at the corner of the field called the New Ground, in cutting a ditch, the workmen came to a bed of stone, such as would have been laid on a Roman road. The coincidence of this apparent construction of a road with the line in the corn across the adjoining field, seemed to indicate that it was the line of a road. (See L in the map.) There was no cause known for the line in the corn, and the supposition of a road might account for it. At present there is no other trace of the road in this part, nor any trace of it beyond in either direction. But it seems that there was some part of the road still entire in Plot's time, for he says of a road (which led, as he supposed, from Allchester to Oxford), "there is a part still remaining about Noke, whence it passes through the fields to the purlie grounds where it cuts the

Worcester road, (the present Islip road,) and so into Drunshil <sup>p</sup>." If this was the course of it, it must have bent considerably to the south-west in going from this spot near Noke to the Islip road: however, there is no trace of it there, that I can discover, now <sup>q</sup>. It is supposed to have passed through the fields called the Purlieu, and to have come into the Islip high-road, near where there is a small barn lately built by Major Weyland; indeed this barn stands on the supposed line. It then followed the line of the present high-road towards the corner of Stow-Wood, and here there are traces of it: for it is plain that an ancient road passed along the piece of rushy grass on the east side of the road in the low ground before ascending the hill towards Stow-Wood. There are in this part three small water-courses running across the rushy ground at intervals, and each of these has an arch of stone of very solid masonry built over it. The work is certainly ancient, and is supposed to be Roman: it is evident that it was a road; and as the ground begins to rise towards Stow-Wood, the old road may be plainly still seen, bending away from the line in which the arches are seen, and turning into the modern road. It seems probable that it crossed the line of the present road aslant, and went up the hill by a little hollow, where the ground seems to have been slightly dug away, and so crossed the

<sup>p</sup> Nat. Hist. Oxfordsh. 31.

<sup>q</sup> Warton indeed says, "I have traced a ridged way from Noke by Wood Eaton, bearing to Elsfield, and thence cutting the Worcester road." Specimen of Hist. Oxfordsh. p. 57. note. This vague description marks nothing of the place. But there is no trusting Warton's account of what he thought he saw.

present road to Elsfield, a few hundred yards from the corner of Stow-Wood. For a road is found again in an unquestionable form on the other side of the Elsfield road, leading in the direction of Headington. In the first field next to the Elsfield road there is no sign of it ; but beyond that there is a very plain ridge of considerable width, in a straight line diagonal to the field, having every appearance of a high bank which has been gradually levelled by the plough, and on and about which there are many stones scattered. Beyond this again it is still plainer : for here it seems to have been the boundary-line between Elsfield and Stow-Wood parishes, in consequence of which a trench has been dug along the Elsfield side of it, and the earth thrown up on the road ; so that it forms a very high bank, which is now covered with wood. (See M in the map.) The stone covering of the road may be felt anywhere in this bank by boring a little distance into it ; and at the south end of it, where it is cut by a hedge and ditch, the construction of it may be plainly seen : it has been regularly coated with a layer of flattish stones packed together, like the part of the Dorchester road at the east end of Stow-Wood : but here it vanishes suddenly. Plot saw this road ; and it is remarkable that some part of it was “paved” in his time very near to Stow-Wood, which is not the case now. But he had not observed the old road between this line and the direction of Noke, namely, the part where the three stone arches are to be seen by the side of the Islip road ; neither did he intimate that this line was connected with that by Noke, but he lays them down in his map as running in different directions, nearly at right

angles to each other ; and in that part which lies on the confines of Elsfield and Stow-Wood parishes, he seems to have mistaken the trench by the side of the road for the road. In Plot's time, too, it seems to have ended at the same point, and as suddenly as it does at present : there is small hope therefore of recovering it now. The line of it, taken across the two fields where it is now visible, points, as Plot described it, straight to Headington, a little to the westward of the church : but there is no trace of a road on any part of the ground in this line. Neither has it ever been discovered in any other direction, by which it might have turned, either to join the Dorchester road, or to go elsewhere. Yet this fragment which remains has not only the most evident features of a Roman road, but also seems to have been of a large size in breadth and height, quite equal in these respects to the Dorchester and Allchester road ; nevertheless it cannot be found for a space long enough to shew to what places it led, whether it was a branch of any other, or what the general bearing of the course was.

Where there is not enough left of the ancient road to judge from the construction or the course of it that it was a Roman work, the next best evidence to this point is the existence of Roman relics in the neighbourhood, indicating that the Romans lived there. Many of these have been found, and are still found about the lines of road which have been described. I will mention such as I have been able to get information of, beginning with those to the north, next to the Allchester end of the line.

About twenty-three years ago a Roman pottery was found in Otmoor in cutting a drain near Fencot.

The spot is in the meadows between the Roman road and Fencot, about a quarter of a mile, or rather more, from the former, on the east, and three fields distant on the south from the lane going (from Charlton) to Fencot. (See D in the map.) A great quantity of broken pottery of all kinds was dug up here in making the cut; but I have not heard of any thing especially curious, except that on one fragment there was the inscription JURE URO: which proves that the Romans took the control of the trade into their own hands, and gave patents or licenses for exercising it; and we may suppose that they did not fail to derive some profit from the permission or privilege granted <sup>a</sup>.

There is one remarkable circumstance relating to this pottery. A few years before it was discovered, a brickmaker was brought from a distance on speculation into Otmoor, to try the clay there for making bricks; and if he found it good enough, it was intended that he should establish a business there. After making many trials in other parts of the moor, he at last ascertained that the best clay of all was just *on this very spot*, and accordingly he made preparation for fixing his abode there, and carrying on his work. Some circumstances made this inconvenient, and he was in consequence obliged to move, and settle himself a little way to the westward, very near the Roman road; but being dissatisfied with this, he gave up the scheme and went away. Soon afterwards it was found, on the discovery of the pottery, that the Romans had been

<sup>a</sup> We may also infer from this that the stamps on the pottery (see p. 22.) were probably the names of the persons to whom the licensees were given.

before him in choosing that ground ; they also, as we may suppose, had proved that this spot yielded the best clay in the country.

Oddington lies to the S. W. of this, about a mile to the west of the Roman road ; and if there had been a western line of road passing from Allchester in the direction of Oxford, as Plot supposed, it might have passed somewhere near here. At Oddington some very curious relics were found, about the year 1815, at the building of the present Rectory-house : (See E in the map.) In digging up the ground to make the garden, several skeletons were uncovered<sup>o</sup>. At first many bones were taken up piecemeal ; but after orders had been given to clear away the earth from them carefully, six or seven were laid bare in a whole state as they had been buried. There were many things remarkable in their condition : they were very slightly covered with earth, not being more than from one to two feet beneath the surface. They were not all together, but dispersed about the ground ; and they were not laid in any order or uniform position, but with the heads and the feet pointing in all directions, as it might happen. Some of them had helmets on, and I have heard it said that the mouldering remains of some weapons were found by the side of some of them. One of them had the head of a spear fixed in his body between the lower rib and the hip : it is also said, (but for this the narrator who saw them could not trust his memory with certainty,) that another had a spear-head under his shoulder. They seemed to be the skeletons of very tall and large men : one was said

<sup>o</sup> See also Skelton's *Antiq. of Oxfordsh.* Ploughly Hundred — Oddington.

to have measured more than six feet from his head to his toes. They were found in no large space of ground in the garden of the Rectory : one of them was lying where the hedge now stands ; and it seems very probable that there may be more still in the ground in the field without the garden, beyond the hedge to the south-west. Some portions of the arms found with the bodies were sent to be examined by competent antiquarian authority at the time when they were dug up, and were judged to be *Roman*. There can be little doubt that the Romans traversed this ground, for besides the great road to Dorchester, about a mile distant, and the pottery about twice that distance, (not to mention the possibility of another nearer line of road,) a Roman copper coin was picked up in a field near the place in 1838. But from the manner in which these bodies were buried, it seems plain that they belonged to a party, which, if not defeated and flying, yet thought it most prudent not to stay very long in the neighbourhood of the enemy, to whose courage they had been the victims. For the slight depth at which they were laid would seem to be owing to want of time to dig deeper<sup>P</sup>. The irregularity of their position would lead to the same conclusion : the natural method would have been, we may suppose, to make one pit, or a few large receptacles, for them, or, at least, to have laid them out in some kind of order ; but these seem to have been just “dug in” as they might chance to lie. Again, their

<sup>P</sup> The ground where they lay had often been ploughed before they were found, and the workmen who dug them up calculated (and it seemed to be a point which interested them) that the plough must have gone within four or five inches of the bodies.

helmets and all their arms would surely have been taken away and kept by the army to which they belonged, unless they had been hard pressed. If therefore these were Roman soldiers, it seems probable that they might have met with a successful resistance at Oddington, which not only caused them the loss of so many men, but also embarrassed the movements of the body to which they belonged, and forced them to make a hasty retreat. Whether the *enemy* here was the native Briton, or some opposing party of Romans, as that of Allectus, or Carausius, must be a matter of conjecture at present. Other remains also have been found near this spot. The place "called Brismere" is said to be "covered with the debris of Roman pottery, extending from the vicarage [rectory] of Oddington to Charlton." A fragment of an urn from this place, and a piece of a leaden vessel, are now in the Ashmolean Museum <sup>q</sup>.

If from Oddington we follow the possible course of the road by the western line to Noke, we have here a trace of Roman intercourse in a coin again. In this very year (1841), in January last, Mr. Wilson picked up in a field at Noke a silver coin of Postumus with the figure of a galley on the reverse.

A little farther on, we come to the site of a considerable Roman settlement at Wood Eaton, in Major Weyland's land, on the hill just above the turning from the Islip road to the village of Wood Eaton. This, which was discovered about thirty-eight years ago, (the ground having been a common before that,) might from the position have been

<sup>q</sup> See Catalogue of Ashm. Mus. Antiq. 164. [Rev. P. Serle, Trinity Coll.]

either a military station or a residence. It is high and airy, on a dry soil, commanding a good view on all sides, in which Allchester is comprehended. (See F in the map.) Traces of buildings appear on the surface, and the materials, stone and brick, are constantly turned up by the plough. Close by is a pond containing good water, which is said never to fail, from which it is supposed that the inhabitants would have been supplied. Many Roman coins have been found on this spot, with pieces of pottery, broken arms, heads of spears and arrows, fibulæ, a broken piece of a thin plate of metal, stamped with the letters—EDO, and other Roman remains. The coins are of different kinds and dates, with inscriptions of Nerva, Trajan, Severus, some which commemorate certain legions, &c. Perhaps it is more likely that this was a military station than a private dwellinghouse: for all that has yet been dug up there does not betoken the building or furniture of a *villa*, and the situation is exactly suited for one of a line of posts, whether in connection with Allchester, or formed independently of that, for communication and defence of the district.

A few hundred yards from this place, on the hill on the opposite side of the small valley through which the road to Wood Eaton passes, is Drunshill, where was another Roman settlement. Plot has recorded that Roman urns were dug up here about fourteen years before he wrote: but he does not seem to have visited the ground himself: neither does any antiquary who has noticed this place since, seem to have done more than repeat his words. The spot is the first hill on the right hand (after passing the road to Wood Eaton), as you come

from Islip towards Stow-Wood, and is just opposite to the stone which marks the end of the Stow-Wood highway; it is the hill where stone is now dug. (See G in the map.) The surface of the ground here is now strewed with small pieces of Roman pottery of different kinds of coarse ware, which perhaps are the remains of those very "urns" of which Plot had been informed. For not only are the fragments very small, but the edges of most of them are rubbed and worn as if they had lain there and been turned over and over again by the plough for generations. But there is another curiosity here: a great number of pieces of iron slag are scattered about the same ground with the pottery, or indeed more plentifully than the pottery. These, when submitted to Dr. Buckland for examination, were pronounced by him to be "slag probably from a Roman smelting work supplied with ore from the iron stone of the lower green sand or shanklin formation on the top of Shotover." This opinion was given by him before he knew whence the specimens came\*. It is likely that this ore had been brought here to be smelted for the sake of the wood growing near, as it was easier to bring the ore down to the fuel, than the fuel to the ore. Perhaps too the vicinity of this iron work agrees better with the supposition that the settlement on the opposite hill in Major Weyland's ground was a military station, than that it was a private dwelling. These settlements confirm the belief that the road along this line was a Roman work, even in those parts where the construction of it cannot now be seen. Whether this road was, as has been conjectured, a second line from Allchester to Dorchester,

\* Some of this is now in the Museum.

intended to be used when the road across Otmoor was flooded, may I think be questioned. It is not likely that the Romans would have made a road which would be impassable some part (perhaps a large part) of every winter. If their object had been *only* to avoid the flooded ground, they might have rejoined the main road by a much shorter circuit than was made if the road did go off through Noke, and so round Stow Wood. The most probable explanation which I can offer is, that this road was made before the other line. I imagine it might have been the way from the south to the settlements at Drunhill and Wood Eaton, and probably others beyond that, at an early period ; that it was continued perhaps by a circuitous route to the north of Otmoor, avoiding the lowest parts, and keeping the ground which was comparatively firm, on the west. After this, when the camp at Allchester was established, I would conjecture that a shorter and straighter road was made across the wettest part of Otmoor to Beckley, and so under Shotover to Dorchester, which naturally, as it was the most direct, became the high road from north to south through this part of the country ; and the other line was in some degree superseded. Perhaps this supposition may in part account for the disappearance of this road ; if the other had made it less wanted, it might have been less carefully kept up in some parts, and so have perished sooner.

To return then to the direct road from Allchester to Dorchester ; at Woodperry house, the residence of Mr. Wilson, evidence of a Roman settlement has been found. At the lower end of his garden great quantities of Roman bricks and tiles, pieces of

pottery, weapons, a leaden weight, coins, and other remains have been dug up. A copper coin of Maximian was found there in January last ; and one of Constantine and one of Claudius Gothicus in 1837. Among the weapons are some barbed heads of arrows or spears with very long barbs, of which some specimens have been found at Wood Eaton also ; and a small hook with a cutting edge on the inside. The use of this last is not known ; it has been supposed that it was a weapon of war for cutting horses' bridles. It *might* be a pruning-hook ; or a weapon of the chase, for disabling the game by cutting the sinews of the legs. Perhaps too the long barbed arrows were for the chase, intended to serve for disabling the game from escaping when wounded. It is remarkable that an arrow head of bone, elaborately ornamented with lines carved on it, was found here also : for this must be supposed to have been a British, rather than a Roman weapon.

Southward of this I have not learnt that any Roman relics have been found near the road, until we come to Baldon. By an enclosure there, called *the old hop garden*, near to what used to be Baldon heath, (see K in the map,) some coins were dug up in the year 1796 or 1797<sup>r</sup>. Among those which I have seen, which are now in the possession of the Rev. John Griffith, fellow of Wadham college, (to whose kindness I am indebted for the use of them, as well as for the knowledge of the fact,) I found the inscriptions of Claudius (11, Gothicus), Constantine, and Magnentius. The Roman remains found at Dorchester have already been noticed. The

<sup>r</sup> I was told by an old inhabitant that he *thought he had heard* of urns having been dug up there also.

coins of that place are well known, and at least one valuable collection of them has been made.

There remains but one more point to notice ; this is, a small portion of an ancient road near Oxford, which has been called Roman, although there is no proof that it was so. It is to be seen in the field adjoining Marston lane, through which the footpath goes up to (the back of) Headington hill ; a few yards from Marston lane, in ascending this footpath, just where there is a small pond, by the rails of the footpath, the road appears, crossing the corner of the field, and running down to the lane, of which it meets the hedge exactly where the stone stands which marks the liberty of the city. If from this pond the eye be turned in the contrary direction, the line may be seen continued on the other side of the hedge, in the field below Mr. Morell's house, in the direction of the end of China lane. The form of the road is still preserved, apparently unchanged, in the lower field, between the footpath and Marston lane : it is there a distinct ridge, made of a compact bed of rather large irregularly-shaped stones\*. Plot noticed this line†, and thought that it was a branch which turned off to Oxford from the Roman road which led from Elsfield to Headington (of which a part appears between Elsfield and Stow-Wood). At present there is no proof of this : neither could Plot trace either of these two branches up to the point where he supposed they met, Headington hill. From the direction of the

\* I am indebted to the Camden Professor of History for pointing out this fragment to me.

† Nat. Hist. Oxfordsh. 30.

few yards of the old road now visible by Marston lane, it might perhaps be thought that it was the continuation of the old London road from Oxford, which formerly passed over Shotover, by the way now called China lane, which turns off in the middle of Headington hill, and to which the old road below would seem to lead<sup>u</sup>: but the construction of it would certainly agree well with the supposition that it is a Roman work.

Plot says little about this, but that it "by its pointing shews as if it once passed the river above Holywell church, straight upon St. Giles's<sup>x</sup>." Warton thought that he traced it much further<sup>y</sup>. The small piece of it which is now visible, points, not at Holywell church, but considerably to the north

<sup>u</sup> Plot thought that the present London road up Headington hill was the line of the Roman road, that the road was originally excavated by the Romans. Wood followed him in this, and thought that the Roman roads met on the top of the hill, one coming up the present hollow (London) road, the other by Joe Pullen's tree. Wood's words are, "*there are evident tracts of a branch of one of the main ways,*" &c. Peshall's Hist. of the City of Oxford, p. 286.

<sup>x</sup> Nat. Hist. Oxfordsh. 30.

<sup>y</sup> He says, "Another branch of the branches of the Akeman street perceptibly slants from the brow of Shotover hill, near Oxford, down its northern declivity; bisects Marston lane, crosses the Cherwell north of Holywell church, with a stone pavement, is there called King's Swath or Way, goes over St. Giles's field and Port meadow, has an apparent *trajectus* over the Isis, now called Binsey ford, being a few yards north of Medley grove, runs through Binsey churchyard, in which are the signatures of large buildings, winds up the hill towards the left, where stood the ancient village of Seckworth, and from thence proceeds to Gloucester, or falls into the Akeman street about Witney." Specimen of a Hist. of Oxfordsh. p. 57, note.

of it, above that point in the Cherwell where the streams divide; that is to say, higher up than Parson's Pleasure. And indeed, if it was a road across the river, it is not unlikely that it should have been carried over a part where there is but one stream, rather than over three; which would have been the case if it had gone from King's mill to Holywell church. But it might easily have turned a little, and so passed nearer to the church. However, I can find no trace of it on any part of this ground.

Mr. Skelton thought Plot's assertion correct; and gave as a reason for it, that he had himself "found Roman money, and other relics, in St. Giles's field, in the gravel-pits immediately facing the public house called the Horse and Jockey, which is the exact direction towards the military works on the hills of the Witham estate."<sup>z</sup>

If the chief ford at Oxford, that from which the name was originally derived, was that by Binsey<sup>a</sup>, which passes out of Port meadow a little above Medley lock, there might have been a road from Marston lane across St. Giles's field and Port meadow to it, passing quite to the north of the present town of Oxford. Or there might possibly have

<sup>z</sup> Skelton's Antiquities of Oxfordsh. Bullington Hundred. St. Clement's. Note. I am not acquainted with any *Roman* military works on the Wytham estate. There is a mound on the hill which overlooks Ensham bridge, which is artificial, and was probably a military work, but not Roman, as I should think. And there was a Saxon castle at Wytham, and perhaps entrenchments at Seckworth. See Hearne Lib. Nig. Scaccar. Append. X. XI.

<sup>a</sup> Hearne Lib. Nig. Scaccar. Append. X. 18.

been a road in that line to serve as a way to the holy spring at Binsey; or to the neighbouring village of Seckworth: but these are mere conjectures at present. If there had been any evidence of such a road in Plot's time, it is likely that he would have noticed it<sup>b</sup>.

The antiquities of Binsey are described in full by Wood<sup>c</sup>. St. Margaret's well (which, according to Wood, was once called St. Frideswide's), famous for the cures which it wrought, was a few feet to the west of the present church. The stone steps leading down to it were dug up not many years ago, and were in existence within the memory of persons now living<sup>d</sup>. A few yards from the church, on the south-west, in the ditch of the field adjoining the church-yard, there is a bed of large stones, much worn; which must either have been part of an ancient road which passed over there, or else must have been brought from some old road or building; more probably the former.

For it is in this direction that the ancient Saxon village of Seckworth<sup>e</sup> lay, which is said to have

<sup>b</sup> Wood says, "there is a place that is called the King's Swarth, which goes down by Buller's *non ultra* (north of the Parks), and soe over the river, which is called the King's Swarth ford. It is paved at the bottom with stone. This way, as is reported, led from Beaumont's to the King's house at Ellesfield." Hearne *ibid.* XI.

<sup>c</sup> Hearne *ibid.* and Peshall. *Hist. of the City of Oxford*, p. 320.

<sup>d</sup> This fact I have from Dr. Cramer, Principal of New Inn Hall, and Public Orator, the present curate of Binsey.

<sup>e</sup> See Hearne and Peshall, *ibid.* The parish clerk of Binsey (who is now a very old man) says, that his mother remembered two of the houses of the village of Seckworth standing.

become a great and rich place, from the resort of pilgrims to St. Margaret's well. It was on the other side of the stream which flows from Wytham, on the rising ground which slopes from the water towards lord Abingdon's woods, about a quarter of a mile to the south-west from Binsey, with which it was connected by a bridge. And in Wood's time, it seems there was abundance of stones from the ruins scattered about the fields and in the river. The tradition then preserved among the people of Binsey was, that there had once been more than twenty inns in Seckworth. When it flourished thus it was the great thoroughfare from Oxford westward, the causeway by Botley not having been yet made. The memory of the place is still preserved in the name of the farm on the north side of the Ensham road, at the turn from Botley towards Wytham; and although there is now little evidence of Seckworth to be found on the surface, except here and there a large stone, much worn, and the inequalities of the ground, there is still a good deal remaining but a little way below. In the third field from the gate by lord Abingdon's lodge, on the way to Wytham village, where the cowshed stands, there are still large foundations under the surface, which have been found in digging: and the ground here is remarkable for the goodness of the soil, and the grass which grows on it; the quality being superior to that of any ground near it. In a line (not quite straight) from this point to the village of Binsey, (not to the church,) the ancient road still exists, about eight inches under ground. It is now described by those who have found it in digging, as

a hard stoned way, about five or six yards wide<sup>f</sup>. The fishermen also say that they can find the stones of the old bridge still in the bed of the river; but these are not visible to all observers. The tradition of the place still remains: the country people say that Seckworth farm has the name from "the old city which stood between that and Wytham."

<sup>f</sup> This proves how such things sink into the ground, and the ground rises and accumulates over them, and so they are entirely buried in the course of ages. There is no trace whatever of this road on the surface now: and yet it seems that not a stone has been removed from it.

